

**[This ol' man wuz 96 year old]**

[? - ?]

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Title Begins This Ol' man wuz 96 years old an his name wuz...

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Project worker Betty Burke

Project editor

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Stories

Stories as told by Marian Monegain, living at 1521 S. Kedjie, son of a southern Negro farmer. Spent childhood on a farm, in Georgia. Personal friend of writer's. Now working as a union coal hiker.

Betty Burke

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Betty

Elizabeth Burke

### AMERICAN FOLK STUFF

This ol' man wuz 96 year old en his name wuz Manish Jones en which his wife wuz named Bella. Well uh, he come erlong in slav'ry time en when slav'ry were very strong, in Georger, en he useter tell us how they de then.

Well uh, he tol' us how they manage t' git food durin' slav'ry time, which durin' this time 'twere only the landowner en slaveowner ben top dog. Said well uh, ever'thin' th' slaves raised, in course, 'twent t' they owner's sto'house en they owner's smokehouse. So sometimes, you see, they'd be very hongry 'count er gittin' mos'ly nuthin' but co'n pene

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en hog backin's, en well uh, somehow er nuther somebody have t' manage t' steal out t' th' smokehouse or th' sto'house ever' once in er while en git out er couple er hams er a li'l flour or lard en such.

Didn' nobody durst see 'em. Say listen you know some slav'ry folk they'd run tell th' slaveowner ef'n they see'd 'em. Said well uh some folk allus afeared, you know. Afeared er this en afeared er that, en specially gittin' whipped, that skeered 'em. En they jus' th' ones whut mes' manage t' git de strong man in trouble en like ez not they own se'f too.

Manish, tho, he were a kin' uv or strong follow en he looked at things differen' en a many slaves. He weren't bad, Manish weren't. En he weren't er coward. Yet en still seem like he spirit jes' wouldn' 'low 'im t' take er lickin' fum nobody. Which he were whipped quite er few, times. Strip naked en they laid it on hard en heavy, yet en still he never stayed whipped. 2 Said one time he wuz in d' fiel' aworkin' away en he cut up er couple er stalks keerless en he done ruint 'em. Well uh, th' overseer he spy 'em. He git mad, says he git hot en he say for t' sen' 'imt' whippin' place right soon's he thu work for day.

Said well uh Manish he kep' on aworkin' yet en still he make up his min' he weren' goin' be whipped that day. En when he git to d' back row he onhitchad dat mule fum de plow en de mule he went on home like they do on Manish he made it on in t' th' woods.

Well uh no time nur place fer him t, eat then on he ain' studyin' bout it. He knew they'd come ahuntin' 'im wid de bloodhoun's. En he make his way deep in th' woods where they's mosly creeks en swamp, you know. Yet en still he don' do nuthin' but he wait.

He say th' secon' night he wuz or layin' down on er ol' rotted log en he hear th' houn's en hear come th' overseers threshin' aroun' thu de woods. Said he run down t'er creek fas' ez lighnin' en he take er piece er soap dat he allus carry wid 'im fo' time like dis, en he wash 'is feet very clean in de wate'. He make de creek where he stan' very soapy en murky like 'cause he churn on splash en whurl de wate'. Then said he cross t' d' other side or th' creek as he ain' leave narry ol' scent fo' th' dogs 'countin he done gone en washed his

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feet en give 'em er new scent. En th' dogs they sniff up en down en that soapy wate' don' do 'em no good. 'tonly mixes 'em so's they cain't git any scent. Manish held be ercross th' creek en held git up in er tree an watch th' overseers. They be aflashin' 3 lanterns all eroun' on cussin' out th' dogs 'cause they done los' track, en they stomp 'roun' fer long while erwhackin' at bushes en such but fin'ly they got to give up en go on home.

Well said uh Manish he clum'down that tree en he know he were safe come mornin'. Yet en still he hadn't nuthin' t' eat that night nur night before.

Well uh said he'd got to kill him er hog. The way he do he break down er small saplin' en go down to th' mud holes. In fact, hogs feed at night soon ez they do by day an they mos' like to feed en root in gullies en bogs. He sneak up behin' er hog en he come right down on er hog loins fit t' kill. Saplin' kin easy break er hog back that way 'counter it's er weakes' spot hog have.

En he drag it down to deepes' swamp 'fore held go for t' clean it. Well uh, bout th' way he do he gather two heapin' bunches er leaves en he wet one bunch rale soppin' en set dat aside. Other bunch he leave dry en pile on th' hog en set afire to it. Befo' th' fire burn down t' th' hog he'd preas the wet leaves on en that way git mos' th' hair off'n it. Say listen you know he had himself a knife out'n er barrel hoop, groun' down til 'twere rals sharp, en he skun th' hog well ez he could. Well uh said he cook some er that hog, keerful like, in co'se, in er bottom, in which couldn' nobody see light o' any fire. En he live like this erwhile.

This in sweet pertato time, long bout then en the slaves in co'se they knowed how come Manish t' be away en which also they 'spectin' 'im. En they git ready fo' t' help 'im much 4 ez they could, you know. Come night some night some uh slaves steal out to de edge o' th' woods en they dig er hole 'bout eight er ten inches deep in er groun' en which also they make it ten er twelve foot eroun'. Res', they manage to git 'em sweet pertatos somehow, mostly they has t' steal 'em. Don't but er few chosen tote 'em down to th' cache 'cause less'n they be caught en they all be whipped en likely t' be sen' down th' river. Said they

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lays th' pertatos side by side'en pile 'em in layers top o' that en then spread a blanket 'bout two inches thick o' pine straw en needles over them en then cover 'em up good with dirt. En they make er little hole fer t' reach in en got at er pertatos easy but yet en still it do be hard t' see, if'n no one knowed 'bout it. That sweet pertato hill it better'n er ol' sto'house.

Then deep night some night Manish he come out o' hidin' en sneak in t' th' huts where the slaves ersleepin'. He give 'em part o' the hog en they tell 'im how they done built er pertato hill en filled it fer t' stay 'im fum hunger fer time. They mighty quiet- if'n they do [?] than whisper th' guards 'ud come down on 'em en didn' nobody eve' fo'git that. Well uh say they do had a feas' by night ercookin' hog en sweet pertatos secret like that, on er oak wood fire, 'counter it make hot ash en low fire. En said come daylight nex' mornin' Manish he wuz gone back to de woods.

En he live like dis two or three months, sometime, he say.

En you know, slaveowners well uh they git tired huntin' 'im. Mos'ly they think he done starved in de swamps. Yet en still they hates t' give up hope. Fin'ly they'd pass th' word eroun' 'mongst th' slaves that if Manish comes back he'd only 5 git five er six lashes.

En that jus' whut he waitin' fo' t' hear. Nex' time he sneak in to de slave huts they tell him whut slaveowners say en so he give himse'f up. En 'stid o' fifty or sixty lashes he don' git but five or six. Said well uh then he'd be er slave ergin.

Manish done do like that many a time en he say he never were ralay hongry 'counter that sweet pertato hill. En you know that's truth.

THE END

Approximately 1400 words

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Lots er folks they don' b'lieve in sech ez speerits. Do say they ain' rightly kin see 'em now'days. Say will uh, up north, cain' see nur hear 'em noways. They ben laid. En de say they cain' travel this a far ways. Do be s' cold en you know they cain' git used t' that.

See'd erplenty on 'em in mah time. Down south, you know.

Me'n Jay M. en George en Lee Roy we'd be ercomin' home wid er passel o' squirrels er mebbe rabbits 't might be en jes' er whoopin' en erhollerin' en er raisin' cain. We ain' be studyin' 'bout nuthin en you know we'd be goin' pas' er point o' de woods en we hear somethin' ercallin' jes ez clear ez er bell. Heard it many a time en called us each by name. Sure wuz er purty soun' en it echo er long time. En which we'd er rather ben bit by er snaggletooth rattelsnake than answer call like that. Speerits ercallin' like that en 'twould mean we goin' die soon would we answer or pay it any min'. Yes indeed.

Sometimes we come home f'um visitin', er church meetin' you know, en it'd be er starry night en moon bright'n up de fiel's, en make 'em look like er shinin' river. En it do seem like a body cain't hear nuthin' cep'm still green corn a rustlin'. Say well uh if'n we stan' on watch uh time like that er pals white houn' it come out like er ghos' on cross d' fiel's an disappear. 'Twere always far away cross de fiel's. You know that er speerit, nuthin' but er res'less speerit.

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Mah dad he had a farm en jes' outside th' fence gate in th' road the' wuz er sandy patch en which er big white rabbit he come en sun 'imse'f in de middle o' de noon'day sun. Said you know we kilt a many a rabbit en one day me 'n George we got us our guns en went for that rabbit. You know gun wouldn't go off. Mah dad he come an he try. En you know that gun never would go off if'n we aim at that rabbit. Now you know that mean er speerit er settin' there.

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Finish